

THE PRESERVATION COALITION
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Dear Neighbor:

October 3, 2007

Recently, you may have received a letter from The Third Church of Christ, Scientist on Park Avenue and 63rd Street in which its Board of Trustees said it was writing to "clarify communications forwarded to you concerning our church." Rather than clarifying the issues, the letter is less than forthcoming about the use of the church by a large commercial catering business, and it mischaracterizes the Preservation Coalition.

The Preservation Coalition is spearheaded by the seven neighboring buildings listed below; it was formed to preserve the residential character of our neighborhood. We have been joined by residents from at least 24 buildings (not "a few of our neighbors" as the church claims), who have attended numerous committee and board hearings of Community Board 8, and who have written hundreds of e-mails and letters to local and state officials opposing the use of the church as a commercial catering hall.

The church has entered into a 20-year multi-million dollar net lease, with two 5-year renewal options, with a catering concern called the Rose Group. Both the Rose Group and the church claim the catering facility is an "accessory use" of the church. In fact, the reverse is true. **The church – with only a small number of members – has become an accessory use to the catering business.** All the pews have been removed from the main sanctuary and the church name has been covered.

It is an insult to our intelligence that the church's letter states, "Our church is not being converted into a 'large scale catering operation.'" **The caterer's own words demonstrate otherwise, as set forth in the attached copies of the Rose Group's online ads.**

We believe that this use of the church as a commercial catering hall violates the New York City zoning laws. Serious concerns also exist about whether serving liquor at these events complies with State Liquor Authority regulations.

And there is no question about the effect these large events have had and will continue to have on the peace and quiet of our neighborhood – commercial deliveries, traffic jams, double parking, noise and after-party sidewalk life and cleaning up well into the night.

The church's statement that "requests for a meeting have been rebuffed" is simply untrue. Our outreach to the church began in November 2006, when the Board of 580 Park Avenue invited the Church Trustees and tenant to meet and start a dialogue about their plans, but **the church declined.**

We are disappointed that the church has now resorted to the scare tactic of suggesting the property might have to be sold to a developer unless the commercial catering operation is allowed to continue. Nevertheless, we understand that the church has financial problems. **We believe appropriate alternatives exist.** A commercial catering hall, however, especially for events of up to 1,500 people, is simply unacceptable for our *residentially zoned* neighborhood.

We are meeting with various City agencies and officials to urge them to stop granting temporary permits for these events and to rule that this use violates the law. If such a ruling is not forthcoming, we shall continue to challenge what we believe to be a clearly illegal use of the church building through various administrative channels, and, if necessary, in court.

Sincerely,

The Preservation Coalition Steering Committee
Representing the Boards of Directors of 550, 555, 563, 565, 570, 575, and 580 Park Avenue